

WINTER 2013-2014

## WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS

*Leadership & Public Service*



*“When you’ve worked hard, and done well, and walked through that doorway of opportunity, you do not slam it shut behind you. You reach back, and you give other folks the same chances that helped you succeed.” — First Lady Michelle Obama (September 4, 2012)*



The 2013-2014 White House Fellows had the privilege of meeting with First Lady Michelle Obama on December 5, 2013. The First Lady shared her reflections on service and government, commitment to military families, and passion for daughters Malia and Sasha. This extraordinary opportunity was punctuated with an even more unprecedented moment – at the conclusion of a candid, off-the-record meeting with the First Lady, President Barack Obama made an unplanned visit to the meeting room, catching the Fellows by great surprise!

## PRESIDENT OBAMA APPOINTS MARY ZIENTS AS CHAIR OF PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON WHITE HOUSE FELLOWSHIPS



Mary Menell Zients is a founder and Board Chair of the Urban Alliance Foundation in Washington, D.C. Previously, Ms. Zients was Chair of the Women for Women International board from 2005 to 2012, and currently serves on the board's Executive Committee. Earlier in her career, she spent four years in strategic management consulting for Fortune 500 companies at Bain & Company. She is currently President of the Board of Trustees of the Maret School in Washington, D.C., was a founding board member of City Year South Africa, and serves as Chair of the U.S. Committee supporting the establishment of the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital. Ms. Zients received a B.A. from Harvard College and an M.Sc. from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

### An Interview With Mary Zients

**Who is the leader you most admire?** *I would have to say that Nelson Mandela is the leader I admire most in the world. It is very timely, with his sad passing this last week, to highlight the things that made him a unique leader and human being. Mandela set an example of a powerful combination of high-principled vision and supreme pragmatism, all with a deep understanding and compassion for human nature. His ability to understand what drives each individual and then to mobilize that drive to contribute to his overarching goals was extraordinary. I think that ability to see the best in people and motivate a person to fulfill his or her potential to serve a higher purpose is the greatest leadership gift and was exemplified by Mandela.*

**What is the most valuable leadership lesson you've learned?** *Don't equivocate once you have established the best course of action in a situation. It is the job of a leader to pick the best possible course and take the inevitable risk around any big decision. There are often many right answers to a problem and it is better to have focused and clear execution of a less than perfect solution than weak implementation of a perfect one.*

**What motivates and inspires you?** *I am motivated and inspired by the opportunity to work with people who are seeking to develop to their maximum potential in service of the greater good. It is so fulfilling to play any role in bringing resources and opportunities that empower people to develop and serve.*

**What advice do you give to your students at Urban Alliance each year?** *We advise our students at Urban Alliance, who are 12<sup>th</sup> grade public school students in DC, Chicago, and Baltimore, to dream their biggest dreams and then relentlessly follow through on every opportunity to advance towards those goals.*

**Can you tell us about your work with Women for Women?** *Women for Women is a wonderful example of an organization that provides women survivors of atrocities in war-torn communities the knowledge and economic opportunity that empowers them to thrive and transform their communities. I had the privilege of serving as the chair of the board of WfW for seven years and there is truly no greater joy than seeing the faces of women at their graduation ceremonies after completing the one-year training program. Many of the graduates go on to start businesses that employ other women, to run for public office, and to build peace and stability in their communities.*

## HELP RECRUIT THE NEXT CLASS OF FELLOWS

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

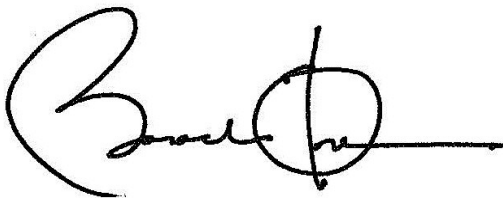
October 30, 2013

Our Nation endures because it has always been home to compassionate, committed citizens who are eager to carry out the necessary work of self-government. Throughout our history, men and women from all walks of life—with an unwavering commitment to public service—have improved our country and moved us forward. Today, public servants work on a broad range of issues, from security and science to education and health care, but they are united by a spirit of service as old as our Union itself.

To continue to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, we must cultivate and prepare our Nation's next generation of leaders and public servants. Established by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964, the White House Fellows Program is part of this effort, offering talented young men and women first-hand experience working at the highest levels of the Federal Government.

After serving a year in our Nation's Capital, White House Fellows return home with a broader understanding of how our Government operates, the work that remains, and the innovations that are possible. This experience will highlight the public service that is the driving force behind our Government and the passion of all those dedicated to making our Nation a better place.

Public service is a noble, important endeavor, and America needs your imagination and ingenuity. You can help lead our country forward, and we hope you consider applying to the White House Fellows Program.



*Michelle Obama*

The enthusiastic support of President Obama and the First Lady have been a driving force in our recruitment efforts to inspire future public service leaders.

Do you know any future White House Fellows? Encourage them to apply! The application deadline is January 15, 2014. Learn more at [www.whitehouse.gov/about/fellows](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/fellows)



## MEET THE WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS CLASS OF 2013-2014



**Charina Choi**, *San Francisco, CA*, a Postdoctoral Fellow in Chemistry at Stanford University. Her work focused on the design of nanomaterials with unique optical and electronic properties and their development for biomedical, electronics, and energy applications. **Placement, Office of Science and Technology**



**Brent J. Cohen**, *New York, NY*, former Director of Legislative and Government Affairs for the New York City Department of Probation, and an Adjunct Assistant Professor at New York University where his courses focused on juvenile justice reform. **Placement, U.S. Office of Personnel Management**



**Daniel Feehan**, *Chicago, IL*, recently graduated from Harvard Kennedy School where he studied urban poverty as well as education and veterans policy. Previously, he worked as a public school teacher through Teach For America after serving for four years as an Active Duty Army Officer and two years in the Illinois National Guard. **Placement, U.S. Department of Defense**



**Justin Finnegan**, *Darien, CT*, former Managing Director and Co-Founder of the Mountain Hazelnuts Group (MHG). As Bhutan's first 100% foreign direct investment, MHG takes a systemic approach to creating reliable income generation opportunities for Bhutan's poorest families while restoring ecosystem health and maintaining community cohesion. **Placement, U.S. Agency for International Development**



**Shirlethia V. Franklin**, *Shaw, MS*, was a Senior Associate with the law firm Alston & Bird LLP in Atlanta, Georgia. She was responsible for managing and defending complex litigation matters and counseling clients in the areas of product liability, toxic tort, mass tort, and medical malpractice law. **Placement, U.S. Department of Justice**

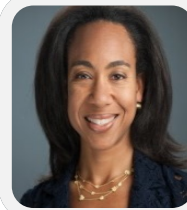


**Erica Gonzalez**, *Pico Rivera, CA*, former Director of Public Policy and Community Partnerships for Green Dot Public Schools. She was responsible for executing Green Dot's reform agenda by advocating at the local, state and federal level for education reform. **Placement, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

## MEET THE WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS CLASS OF 2013-2014



**Cara LaPointe**, *Bethesda, MD*, a Commander in the United States Navy, served as the Deputy Technical Director of the Littoral Combat Ship Program where she provided government technical oversight to \$7 billion of shipbuilding contracts. **Placement, Office of the First Lady**



**Debra McCoy**, *San Francisco, CA*, managed Emerging and Frontier Market Investment Initiatives for the Stanford Management Company, the entity responsible for investing the Stanford University endowment. At Stanford she conceived, developed, and co-taught a course in the Graduate School of Business about investing in frontier markets. **Placement, U.S. Department of State**



**Robert McFarlin**, *Detroit, MI*, a Lieutenant Commander and Surface Warfare Officer in the United States Navy, deployed to over 30 nations on six continents, most recently as Commanding Officer of the USS TYPHOON in the Arabian Gulf supporting Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. **Placement, National Economic Council**



**Kapil Parakh**, *Washington, DC*, a cardiologist, was the Director of Heart Failure at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center and Assistant Professor in the Departments of Medicine, Epidemiology, and Health Behavior & Society. He led heart failure quality improvements in collaboration with the Joint Commission's Center for Transforming Healthcare. **Placement, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**



**Maura Sullivan**, *Palo Alto, CA*, former Senior Director at RMS, a global risk modeling firm, where she led the development of multidisciplinary structural models for managing complex systemic risks in life and health markets. She advised the financial and insurance industry on mortality-causing catastrophic events. **Placement, U.S. Department of the Navy**



**Victor Wu**, *Kingsport, TN*, a primary care physician, most recently served as Chief Medical Resident at Grady Memorial Hospital for the Emory University Internal Medicine Residency program. He helped oversee daily training of resident physicians and coordinated medical student and resident education. **Placement, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

## PLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

### **Shirlethia Franklin: US Department of Justice**

Within hours of my arrival at the Department of Justice in the Office of the Deputy Attorney General—following the customary orientation and welcoming introductions—I was assigned two very interesting projects involving violence against women and tribal law. Through my work involving tribal issues, I had the opportunity to travel to Bismarck, North Dakota with Associate Attorney General Tony West and staff for the initial hearing of the Attorney General’s Advisory Committee on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence.



I remain truly impressed with the Department’s commitment to addressing very challenging and urgent issues facing children in tribal communities. I have also been heavily engaged as the Department’s staff representative on an interagency Task Force to Expand National Service, an initiative created at the directive of President Obama. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to work on such an important project, particularly given that public service is both the fabric of the White House Fellows Program and a personal passion and commitment. Recently, I was asked to assist with planning the Department’s commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Recognizing that the Civil Rights Act—and those who fought tirelessly and selflessly for justice and equality—has made it possible for me to have the privilege of serving as a White House Fellow. I am honored to be a part of such a momentous occasion.

### **Justin Finnegan: US Agency for International Development**

After my initial few weeks of on-boarding, meeting people, and trying to learn the lay of the land at USAID, I realized that I had to be proactive and target assignments in areas where I was interested, could add value, and would expose me to new skills and experiences. This resulted in my working on assisting Myanmar (Burma) with its transition from a half-century of civil war and military rule to a democratic and more inclusive society. Having spent time in Myanmar, I realized that I had landed at USAID at the perfect time to engage in a part of the world that I have been passionate about for many years and work on problems where my skills were well suited. Helping Myanmar through this transition is also a USG priority, as President Obama traveled to Myanmar in 2012 as the first president to visit the country and to personally open a USAID Mission. USAID’s Administrator plans to travel to Myanmar this coming year to assess the progress made.

I am working on several projects, but am focusing on areas where I can leverage my past relationships and experiences as an agribusiness investor and entrepreneur in Asia. Since two-thirds of Myanmar’s population lives in rural areas, I have worked with a great team at USAID to reach out to large American and international agriculture companies to consider investing in Myanmar. I have been speaking to business leaders, who are interested in talking about the country’s many opportunities.



## SERVING THE COMMUNITY



### WAEC 5K

To kick off our community service activities for the year, the White House Fellows and their families volunteered at the Washington D.C. Area Eosinophilic Connection (WAEC) 2nd Annual 5K walk/run event. The Fellows first learned about this rare disorder when Fellow Debbie McCoy shared that her nephew suffers from an immune disorder that impacts Eosinophil cells and causes extremely severe food and environmental allergies as a result.

### DC CENTRAL KITCHEN

In October, the Class of 2013-2014 donned bouffant caps, aprons, and gloves while volunteering as food-preparation sous-chefs at DC Central Kitchen (DCK). DCK is “America’s leader in reducing hunger with recycled food, training unemployed adults for culinary careers, serving healthy school meals, and rebuilding urban food systems through social enterprise.” The slicing and dicing on this particular Sunday afternoon was fast and furious, as the Class—along with family and friends—chopped vegetables, tossed salads, baked pumpkin cake, and inventoried walk-in refrigerators. Using food donated from area restaurants and grocery stores, the Class helped DCK prepare some of the more than 5,000 meals served each day to over 100 homeless shelters, transitional homes, and non-profit organizations. The opportunity to give back to the community, while simultaneously enjoying hours of laughter and fun, made the DCK event a tremendously rewarding service and bonding experience for the Class.

### FISHER HOUSE

November brought an opportunity to discover our hidden culinary talents all in the name of public service. Our class volunteered to cook lunch for approximately 20 veterans and family members staying at the DC Fisher House. The Fisher House is a network of comfort homes located on military and VA hospital campuses where military and veterans’ families can stay at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment. Armed with 10 pounds of beans, beef, and tomatoes, we prepared a three-bean chili complete with appetizers, salad, brownies, and chili toppings galore. With an army of 17 working together in the kitchen, we were reminded of the joy that comes from serving alongside friends and the power of simple gestures like a home-cooked meal to encourage those in times of stress or sadness. The warmth of the chili, which proved to be surprisingly tasty, provided the perfect opportunity to share the warmth of fellowship with veterans and their family members as well as amongst our class. Hearing the stories of the sacrifice and resilience of those individuals was inspiring and reminded us of the appreciation we owe our military families. This service activity proved an incredibly uplifting experience for us all and all of us left with full hearts and full stomachs.



## COMMISSIONER UPDATE

### A WARM WELCOME TO NEW COMMISSIONERS

The start of a new year is always filled with excitement and anticipation of the journey ahead. As we enter 2014, we would like to congratulate our new Commissioners.

We welcome them and look forward to working together to fulfill President Johnson's vision to develop public service leaders.

#### ***Welcome:***

Mary Zients, *Chair*

Katherine Archuleta

Matrice Ellis-Kirk

Alice Germond

Azita Raji

Rion Ramirez

We would like to thank those Commissioners who have served graciously and tirelessly over the past four years.

Ambassador John Phillips, *Chair*

Ambassador John Berry

Tom Brokaw

Senator Tom Daschle

Pierre Omidyar

Senator Paul Sarbanes

Dr. Ruth Simmons

Dr. Bryan Traubert

Larry Tribe





## WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS OFFICE UPDATE

Congratulate our Public Relations Associate, Fatimeh Shamseddine on her engagement and upcoming wedding in February. We send her our best wishes. And to Sophie Kim, Associate Director for Education on her marriage to Shane Goldmacher on October 26, 2013.

Thank you to our wonderful fall interns, Addie Davis and Michaela Cooke for all their hard work!

We also send our best wishes to Pandoria Nobles-Jones, Administrative Officer for a speedy recover from her surgery.

With the New Year approaching we announce a few changes, two of our staffers, Fatimeh Shamseddine & Marisa Pryor will be leaving the White House Fellows Office in December. We are sad to lose a part of our team but wish them well in their future endeavors.

*Happy Holidays from the White House Fellows Office!*



## WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION UPDATE



Buzz Aldrin, speaker at the 2013 WHFAA Annual Leadership Conference

**2013 Leadership Conference:** Meeting Grand Challenges: A very complete report, to include videos, photos and webcasts of the conference events can be viewed online at [www.whff.org](http://www.whff.org). Take a look and enjoy!

**WHFAA Leadership Changes:** Kinney Zalesne (95-96) has assumed the role of President from David Moore (96-97) and is ably supported by newly elected officers VP Ziad Haider (10-11), Treasurer Kevin Monroe (96-97), Secretary Lou O'Neill (04-05), and Development Officer Alan Kopit (87-88).

Newly elected Directors-at-Large are Maggie Belknap (92-93), Don Haider (76-77) and Julia Vindasius (95-96). Our new *ex officio* directors are Rod Lewis (11-12) and Kermit Jones (12-13).

We bid farewell and thank Lawrence Golub (92-93), our Treasurer for 20 years, Secretary Mark Vlasic (06-07), Development Director Will Webb (86-87) and At-Large Directors Priscilla Douglas (81-82) and Dave Melcher (87-88) for their devoted service on behalf of the Community of White House Fellows.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### CLASSES OF 2009-2013

#### CLASS OF 2009-2010

**Kellee James** is founder and CEO of Mercaris, a market data service and on-line trading platform for organic, non-GMO and other certified agricultural commodities.

**COL Rob Lyman** is an active duty Air Force Colonel. He transitioned in summer 2013 from command of the 88th Communications Group at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio to becoming the Director of Communications (AMC/A6) and CIO for the Air Force's Air Mobility Command with the mission to provide rapid global mobility and sustainment for America's armed forces--providing airlift, aerial refueling, special air mission, and aeromedical evacuation. His wife Nancy, and their two daughters, Ava and Brooke, are now settled at Scott AFB outside St Louis.

#### CLASS OF 2010-2011

**Pat Basu** recently helped create a venture backed start up, Doctor on Demand, which is a national web-based service that allows patients to video consult over any mobile device for a live consultation with a licensed physician for medical advice, prescriptions or referrals. Doctor on Demand partners with TV programs such as "The Doctors" and "Dr. Phil" as well as some of the nation's top employers, technology companies and health systems to reach millions of patients. In addition to overseeing the approximately 1,000 doctors in the network, Pat continues his clinical practice.

**R. Erich Caulfield** is the Founder and President of the Caulfield Consulting Group, a New Orleans-based management consulting firm that specializes in helping clients improve their organizational performance and grow through government partnerships.

**LTC Jason Dempsey** returned from his last deployment to Afghanistan this spring, where he served as a combat advisor to the Afghan Border Police along the Af-Pak border. He is now working in the Pentagon as special assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, making him one of the two most important Dempsey's in the Pentagon.

**Thomas Fisher** is Vice President of New Customer Health Strategy and Research for Health Care Service Corporation. He shapes strategy that addresses the unique health needs of those who are newly insured for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Montana. He also practices emergency medicine at The University of Chicago Medical Center.

**CDR Holly Harrison** will complete a two year assignment as Commanding Officer of USCGC NORTHLAND (WMEC-904), homeported in Portsmouth, VA, in the Spring of 2014. During her tour, she has conducted a number of patrols ranging from New England's offshore fishing grounds to drug and illegal migrant smuggling routes in the Caribbean. Upon departing the NORTHLAND, she will become the first Coast Guard member to serve as a National Security Affairs Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

**Jeffrey Prescott** is now Deputy National Security Advisor to Vice President Biden in the White House.

**CDR Sunny Ramchandani** is currently the Medical Director of Healthcare Business at the Naval Medical Center San Diego. In this role, he is leading efforts on San Diego's "Integrated Health Community" initiative, whereby patients are integrated with community health services throughout San Diego County thus improving health outcomes while simultaneously lowering healthcare costs.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW CONT....

### CLASS OF 2011-2012

**Albert Cho** is Vice President, Strategy and Business Development at Xylem Inc, a global water technology company headquartered in White Plains, NY.

**Kisha Davis** is the Director of Primary Care and Community Health at Casey Health Institute in Maryland. The integrative primary care center opened in early 2013. She was also elected as the New Physician Member of the American Academy of Family Physicians. She and her husband continue to stay busy raising their 2 sons.

**Ziad Haider** is an attorney at White & Case LLP specializing in investment disputes and national security matters and is currently serving as Vice President of the White House Fellows Foundation and Association, in which capacity he will be organizing the 2014 Annual Leadership Conference.

**CDR Theodore R. Johnson** is a cyber operations officer on the Joint Staff where he provides expertise to the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He also continues to write for major publications such as *The Atlantic* and the *Wall Street Journal*, among other outlets. Ted will begin a doctoral program next summer and recently fulfilled a personal goal when he gave a TEDTalk at TEDxOrlando.

**Debra Kurshan** is currently working as an education consultant with The Parthenon Group. She is primarily working with school districts on strategic planning projects.

**MAJ Jaron Wharton** is currently stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and is an infantry battalion executive officer.

### CLASS OF 2012-2013

**Dave Chokshi** is working as a primary care internist and Assistant Professor of Population Health and Medicine at New York University.

**Mark Hanis** is spending time with family, exploring next steps, and open to good ideas.

**Kermit Jones** is an associate at the Washington, D.C. law firm, Hyman, Phelps & McNamara. His work focuses mostly on FDA law and drug and medical device development.

**Bethany Henderson** is currently on sabbatical, after having exhausted all possible extensions to her 2012-2013 Fellowship. While plotting her next adventure, she is writing, traveling, and continuing to stay involved with public service by informally advising the Administration on an initiative she coordinated while a Fellow.

**Anand Veeravagu** currently serves as Senior Neurosurgery Resident at Stanford University School of Medicine. Focused on traumatic brain injury, complex spinal deformity, and patient centered healthcare outcomes research - Anand shares his time between his clinical practice and efforts in the area of healthcare reform.

**Jason Washington** has accepted a position as Senior Vice President, Community Wealth Building Initiative, at City First Enterprises in Washington, DC. He is working closely with anchor institutions and local communities to create wealth-building jobs in the Washington metropolitan area.



## STAY INVOLVED!

### Help Recruit & Select the 2014-2015 Class of White House Fellows

Here are some of the best ways to support our recruitment efforts.

**TWEET** Many people tweeted on November 1st when the application went live, however we need to keep up the momentum and encourage you to tweet about the program until its application deadline on January 15, 2014 at 5:59pm (EST). ***Tweet:*** “White House Fellowship is America’s most prestigious prgrm for leadership & public service. Apply <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/fellows> #BecomeaWHF.”

**HOST AN OUTREACH EVENT** If you have an outreach event planned or would like to host an event in your area, please contact the WHF Office so we can support you.

**HOST A READING GROUP** Reading groups will be conducted in February. If you are interested in hosting a reading group for alumni in your area, please let us know. We can help coordinate a date and location.

**BE A READER** Once all reading groups are finalized, we will send out a comprehensive list of all the reading group hosts and locations. We hope you can join one of the groups in your area.

**If you would like to be a reader or reading group host, please send us an email at [whitehousefellows@who.eop.gov](mailto:whitehousefellows@who.eop.gov)**



## ABOUT THE WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS PROGRAM

The White House Fellows Program is a non-partisan program that offers exceptional young leaders firsthand experience working at the highest levels of the Federal government.

### Fellowship Selection Criteria:

- A record of remarkable professional achievement early in one’s career
- Evidence of strong leadership skills and the potential for further growth
  - A demonstrated commitment to public service
- The knowledge and skills necessary to contribute successfully at the highest levels of the Federal government

For more information, please visit our webpage at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/fellows>

### The President’s Commission on White House Fellowships

Phone: 202-395-4522 Fax: 202-395-6179

*Please send any comments, submissions or other newsletter-related communication to [WhiteHouseFellows@who.eop.gov](mailto:WhiteHouseFellows@who.eop.gov)*